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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes key findings from a 2000 nationwide poll regarding support and demand for after-school programs. Participating in the poll were 800 adults over age 18 who are registered to vote. The findings included the following: (1) 92 percent of respondents agreed that there should be an organized activity/place for children and teens after school every day; (2) even parents who are home when children return from school overwhelmingly (91 percent) agreed that there should be organized activities after school; (3) over 80 percent believed that after-school programs are a necessity; (4) a majority believed there is a lack of availability of after-school programs; (5) two-thirds say children would be better off taking part in a comprehensive after-school program than going home after school; (6) voters say the most important results of after-school programs are: helping working families, providing opportunities to learn and master new skills, and improving academic achievement; (7) a large majority want government to set aside funding for such programs; and (8) 62 percent are willing to pay $100 more per year in state taxes to pay for after-school programs. (EV)

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Afterschool Alert:
Poll Report No. 3

A Report of Findings from a June 2000 Poll of Registered Voters

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AFTERSCHOOL ALERT POLL REPORT

No. 3

Afterschool Alliance

A Report of Findings from a June 2000 Poll of Registered Voters, a Project of the Afterschool Alliance Funded by the Mott Foundation and JCPenney

Support for Afterschool Stays High
But so does concern over availability

For the third year in a row, afterschool programs and how they ***keep kids safe, help working families*** and ***improve academic achievement,*** are top-of-mind with the American voting public. But, for two out of three of those voters, finding the quality afterschool programs they need remains a top concern in spite of recent growth in afterschool initiatives. Demand for quality, daily afterschool programs still outpaces supply.

According to the June 2000 nationwide survey, nine out of ten voters want daily, organized and supervised activities after school for America's children. The survey—the latest in a series of polls conducted by the Afterschool Alliance—also reinforces a trend of overwhelming voter support for afterschool programs regardless of race, gender, geographic region or party affiliation. Previous polls were conducted in 1998 and 1999.

Key Findings of June 2000 Afterschool Survey

- ◇ More than nine out of ten voters (92%) continue to believe that there is a need for some type of organized activity or place where children can go after school every day that provides opportunities to learn. Seventy-five percent (75%) of that majority strongly believe.
- ◇ Even parents who are home when children return from school overwhelmingly (91%) agree that there should be organized activities after school. Seventy-three percent (73%) of that majority strongly agree.
- ◇ More than eight out of ten voters (86%) continue to say it is important to them personally to ensure access to afterschool programs for children in their communities, and that afterschool programs are a necessity (82%).
- ◇ More than two-thirds of voters (69%) say that there are not enough afterschool programs.
- ◇ Seven out of ten voters (71%) say it is difficult for parents to find afterschool programs in America; six out of ten voters (60%) say it is difficult for parents to find afterschool programs in their communities.
- ◇ Two-thirds of voters (66%) say children would be better off taking part in a comprehensive afterschool program than going home after school.
- ◇ Voters say the most important results of afterschool programs are:
  - —helping working families;
  - —providing opportunities to learn and master new skills; and
  - —improving academic achievement.
- ◇ Eighty percent (80%) of voters want the federal government to set aside specific funds for afterschool programs; 79 percent want their state government to do so; 83 percent want city and country governments to do so; and 82 percent want school districts to do so.
- ◇ Three out of five voters (62%) are willing to pay $100 more per year in state taxes to pay for afterschool programs.

Voters quantify afterschool programs as a necessity—not an add-on. The approval ratings for afterschool—historically above ninety percent—put afterschool on par with the level of voter interest in other significant issues such as Social Security and law enforcement.

—Dave Sackett, The Tarrance Group

The findings discussed in this publication are based on a nationwide survey among 800 adults, 18 years of age or older who are registered to vote. The survey was conducted from June 11–14, 2000 by the polling firms of Lake Snell Perry & Associates and The Tarrance Group. The margin of error for this survey is +/-3.1 percent.

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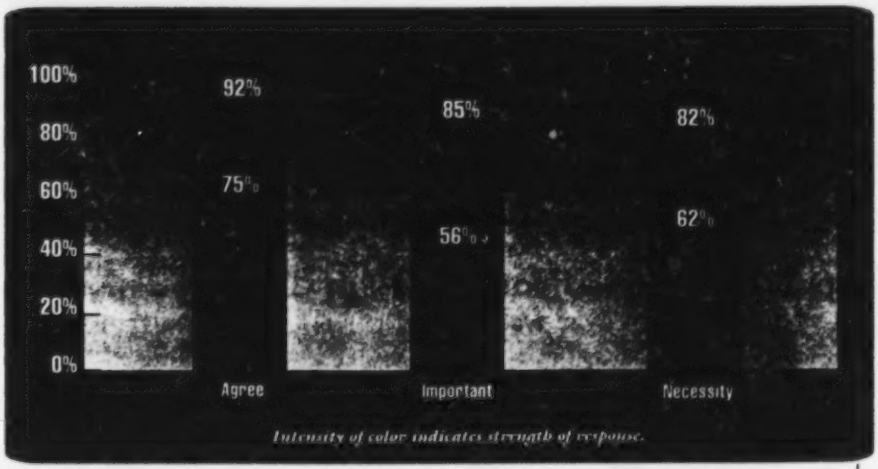
Afterschool: A Timely Solution

Support for organized afterschool activities has remained consistently high—above 90 percent—since the Mott Foundation began polling voters about afterschool in 1998. And the percentage of voters who strongly assert the need for afterschool has remained above 70 percent.

More than one-third of voters believe that the biggest problem facing children today is that they are alone and unsupervised. This concern has grown in recent years, increasing to 38 percent this year from 26 percent in last year's afterschool survey. Add the respondents who are concerned about children having no adult supervision after school and the level of concern over this particular issue rises above 50 percent.



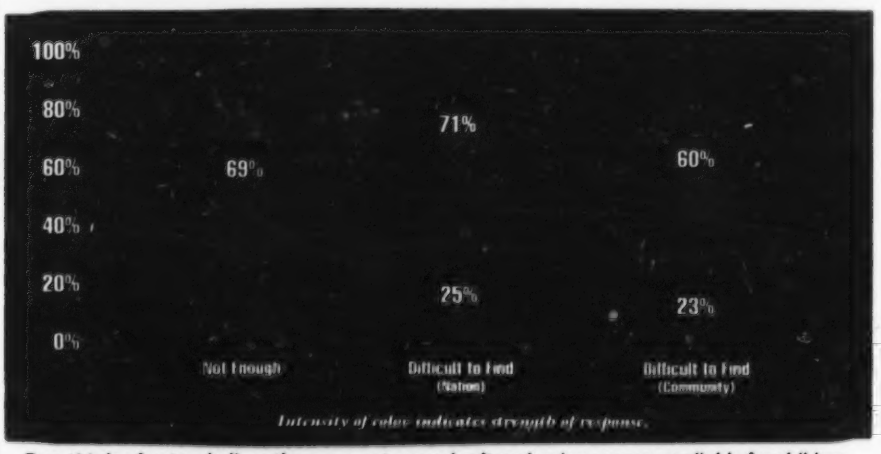
Nine out of ten voters believe there should be organized activity or a place for children to go after school every day that provides opportunities to learn. Eight out of ten voters say it is personally important to ensure access to afterschool and that afterschool is a necessity.

Agreement over the need for afterschool programs crosses partisan lines, with 93 percent of Democrats, 90 percent of Independents and 88 percent of Republicans agreeing that there should be some type of organized activity after school.

Not Enough and Difficult to Find

Two-thirds of voters continue to believe that there are not enough afterschool programs in America today—an increase from 65 percent one year ago. This remains true despite the growth in programs like the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative.

Add to the concern over the quantity of programs concern over finding them. Six out of ten voters say it is difficult to find afterschool programs in their local communities. Of that group, 23 percent say it is very difficult. Expanding the geographic reach from the community level to the entire country intensifies the scope of perceived difficulty, with 71 percent of survey respondents believing it is difficult to find programs in the nation.



Two-thirds of voters believe there are not enough afterschool programs available for children in America today. Moreover, seven out of ten voters say it is difficult to find afterschool programs in the nation, and six out of ten voters say it is difficult to find afterschool programs in their communities.

Reality for today's families has changed dramatically. Providing academic and social enrichment at home is difficult as more family members and family leaders work outside the home. Today, other avenues are needed to help provide a strong foundation. Afterschool is proving to be one of those ways.

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A Learning Solution

Eighty-eight percent of voters embrace the description of an afterschool program that uses public school buildings during after school hours. In particular, voters look to school-based programs to improve the academic achievement of participants, to provide a place where homework can be done and to reach the most children. Overall support of this type of afterschool program has remained above 85 percent since 1998.

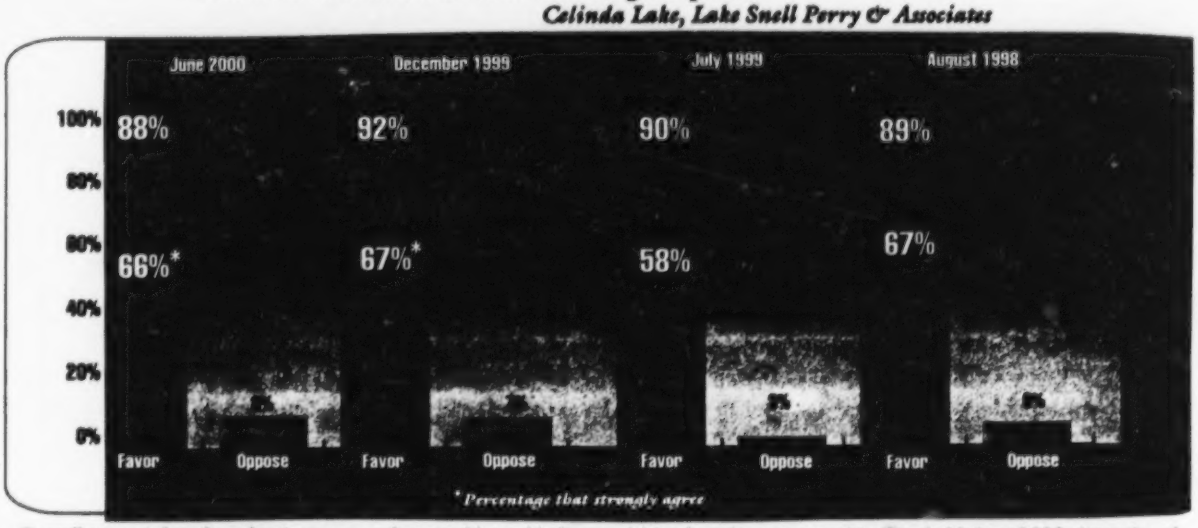
"Improving academic achievement" and "providing opportunities to learn" are second only to "helping working families" as the top choices among voters for the most important outcomes from afterschool programs.

Two-thirds of all parents believe that children are better off participating in afterschool programs than going home after school.

Poll Question:

"Now let me read you about a program some people have recommended implementing. This comprehensive afterschool program would use public school buildings during after school hours five days a week to provide children with fun, enriching learning opportunities that extend beyond schools' traditional academic style, that challenge them, and that give them more individualized attention. Having heard this description would you favor or oppose providing this program to children in your community?"

Voters are looking for a program that is beyond childcare—a program that is richer and that includes a learning component.
Celinda Lake, Lake Snell Perry & Associates



Overall support for afterschool programs that would provide fun, enriching learning opportunities has held since 1998. Intensity of support has also held constant.

** Split Sampled Question: Asked of only half of respondents. Intensity of color reflects intensity of respondents' reactions.*

Everyone is Responsible

Respondents recognize that bringing afterschool providers together will better support the needs of children in their community—from parents to government, public schools to community organizations, the private sector to faith-based organizations. Two-thirds of voters believe businesses should play a role in helping to develop community afterschool programs.

Respondents recognize that bringing afterschool providers together will better support the needs of a community. Therefore, a majority prefers that schools and community organizations work together, instead of compete, for resources needed to provide afterschool programs to more children.

When it comes to ensuring afterschool programs, no one is excused. American voters expect everyone to help ensure afterschool for all.

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Paying for Programs

Government at all levels, including school districts, should set aside specific funds for afterschool programs, according to eight out of ten voters. Six out of every ten of those voters **strongly** agree all levels of government should set aside funds for afterschool.

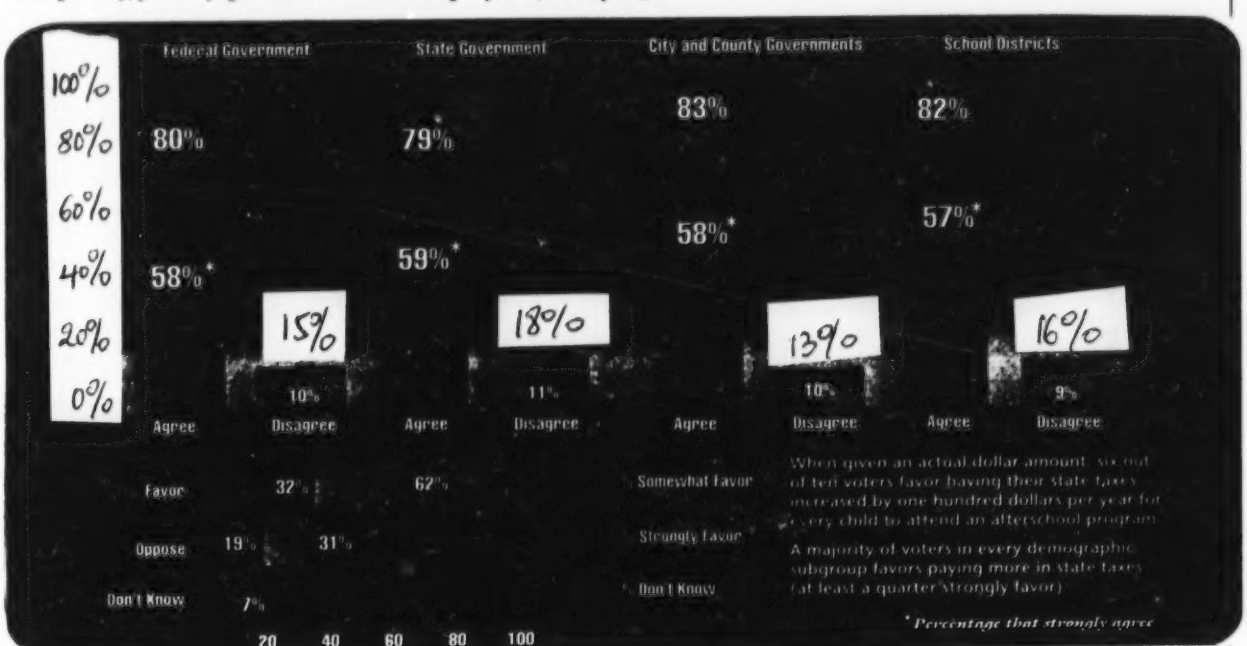
More than six out of ten voters say the responsibility for paying for afterschool programs should be **all** taxpayers' responsibility, but parents who use the programs should pay more. Remarkably, six out of ten voters favor having their state taxes increased by one hundred dollars per year* for every child to attend an afterschool program.

And, consistent with previous surveys, voters are willing to use additional federal or state taxpayer money to pay for an afterschool program costing $1,000 per child per school year**, whether they have school-age children or not.

✎ ***Even during this time of federal government budget surplus, which did not exist two years ago, voters continue to support allocation of federal taxpayer dollars to afterschool programs.***

** This figure is a polling benchmark against which to test voter willingness to pay additional out-of-pocket funds at the state level. Willingness to pay additional taxes was also tested in the July 1999 survey, with the majority of respondents willing to use up to $25 of their own money to support afterschool programs in their communities.*

*** This figure is derived from the average annual cost of a sampling of school-based afterschool programs conducted three hours per day, five days per week and 32 weeks per year (school year).*



Eight out of ten voters agree government at all levels as well as school districts themselves should set aside specific funds for afterschool programs, with just under six out of ten voters in strong agreement.

Afterschool Surveys

Key findings from the following afterschool polls are available at

www.afterschoolalliance.org

or

www.mott.org/21stcentury

June 2000 • December 1999 • July 1999 • August 1998

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Since 1998...

- ◇ Nine out of ten voters continue to believe there should be some type of organized activity or place for children to go after school every day.
- ◇ Eight out of ten voters continue to say it is personally important to ensure access to afterschool programs whether talking about children in their communities or about all children. Eight out of ten voters continue to say it is very important.
- ◇ Eight out of ten voters continue to see afterschool programs as a necessity.
- ◇ Two-thirds of voters continue to believe there are not enough afterschool programs.
- ◇ More than six out of ten voters continue to say the responsibility for paying for afterschool programs rests with taxpayers–either all or part.

✍ *Support for afterschool programs defies conventional wisdom. People continue to show support even after being asked to consider paying $100 more per year in state taxes to fund afterschool. The fact that people continue even then to support the programs at a high rate shows the commitment they feel toward afterschool.*

Alysia Snell, Lake Snell Perry & Associates

Common Elements of High-Quality Afterschool Programs for School-Age Children

- ◇ Goal setting, strong management and sustainability
- ◇ Quality afterschool staffing
- ◇ Attention to safety, health and nutrition issues
- ◇ Effective partnerships with community-based organizations, juvenile justice agencies, law enforcement and youth groups
- ◇ Strong involvement of families
- ◇ Enriching learning opportunities
- ◇ Linkages between school day and afterschool personnel
- ◇ Evaluation of program progress and effectiveness

Working for Families and Children: Safe and Smart Afterschool Programs, U.S. Department of Education, March 2000

Afterschool: It's Working

- ◇ The UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation found that students with at least four years participation in the LA's BEST afterschool program had better subsequent school attendance, which led to higher academic achievement on standardized tests of mathematics, reading and language arts.
- ◇ Prior UCLA evaluations found that parents of LA's BEST children reported less stress in homes because afterschool provided homework completion programs.
- ◇ The University of Cincinnati, when evaluating the Ohio Hunger Task Force's urban afterschool initiative, found fourth-graders exceeded the statewide percentage of students meeting proficient standards in math, writing, reading, citizenship and science.
- ◇ The RAND Corporation, when evaluating afterschool programs supported by Foundations, Inc. in the Philadelphia area, found that fourth-graders in the program out-performed comparison students in reading, language arts and math.
- ◇ The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in Highland Park, Michigan, reported a 40 percent drop in juvenile crime in their neighborhood after the program's implementation.
- ◇ Participants in a Chattanooga, TN, 21st Century Community Learning Centers program reported a drop in absenteeism from 568 days per year to 135 at one school, and from 148 to 23 at another.

Afterschool Alliance

The Afterschool Alliance was initiated and currently is coordinated by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation as a coalition of public, private and nonprofit organizations dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocating for quality, affordable programs for all children. Launched publicly in September 1999 by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, initial participants in this emerging alliance were:

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
The U.S. Department of Education
JCPenney
The Advertising Council
The Entertainment Industry Foundation
The Creative Artists Agency Foundation

Since that time, others have joined in the pursuit of building strong public will in support of afterschool programs. The work of the Alliance includes research, public education, community engagement and promotion of investment in afterschool. By helping to create more afterschool programs, increase program quality, and move toward long-term sustainability of existing programs, the Alliance strives to ensure that every child has access to quality, affordable afterschool programs by the year 2010.

Lights On Afterschool

On October 12, 2000, more than 1,200 communities across America celebrated this new annual opportunity to shine the lights on afterschool programs

To Find Out More:

202-296-9378
www.afterschoolalliance.org

CHARLES STEWART
MOTT FOUNDATION

The Mott Foundation was established in 1926 to support efforts promoting a just, equitable and sustainable society. During more than 65 years of funding community education, Mott has provided more than $200 million locally, nationally and internationally for the development of community-school partnerships. Mott has committed $95.2 million over six years to afterschool and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) afterschool program initiative for training, technical assistance, evaluation and public awareness building. *To learn more, visit:*

www.mott.org/21stcentury

The U.S. Department of Education's CCLC initiative funds local communities to create afterschool programs. The fastest growing discretionary grant program in the Department, funding for the 21st CCLC initiative has increased over the past four years from $1 million to $453 million in the year 2000. The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, and Labor are working closely with this initiative. *To learn more, visit:*

www.ed.gov/21stcclc
or call
1-800-USA-LEARN

JCPenney afterschool powering their potential

JCPenney is one of America's largest department store, drugstore, catalog and e-commerce retailers. The company operates nearly 1,150 JCPenney department stores in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Mexico. Eckerd Drugstores is comprised of nearly 2,900 drugstores located in the Southeast, Sunbelt and Northeast regions of the U.S. locations.

With a 98-year history of supporting education and families, JCPenney has made a multi-year, $30 million commitment to increase the number of high quality, affordable afterschool programs in communities through the JCPenney Afterschool Program. As part of that effort, JCPenney is contributing more than $4 million for Alliance activities plus donating advertising and outreach efforts on afterschool.

To learn more, visit:

www.jcpenney.net/company/afterschool

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